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Message Text

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71
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7443
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFCR, PN
SUBJECT: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: WEEKEND PRESS COVERAGE

SUMMARY: PANAMANIAN NEWS MEDIA GOOD FRIDAY, EASTER SUNDAY AND EASTER MONDAY CARRIED FULL AND FAVORABLE COVERAGE OF WHITE HOUSE PRESS BRIEFINGS LATE LAST WEEK AND APRIL 17 NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL CANAL NEGOTIATIONS. REPORTAGE AND EDITORIAL COMMENTS REASSURE LOCAL READERS THAT USG FIRM IN ITS COMMITTMENT TO CONCLUDE A NEW TREATY ON GUIDELINES OF THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL SPANISH LANGUAGE PAPERS ON GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 16 GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO LETTER CUM PRESS RELEASE ON THE NEGOTIATIONS FROM TORRIJOS' PRESS COORDINATOR, FABIAN VALARDE. IN HIS LETTER TO THE PUBLISHERS, VELARDE SPECIFIED THAT: "INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM OFFICIAL UNITED STATES SOURCES" (READ EMBASSY) ESTABLISHED CLEARLY THAT "THE UNITED STATES REMAINS COMMITTED TO NEGOTIATING A TREATY WITH A FIXED EXPIRATION DATE, AND RECONFIRMED AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S STATEMENT THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE BASED ON THE TACK-KISSINGER JOINT STATEMENT WHICH DETERMINED THAT THE CANAL WILL REVERT COMPLETELY TO PANAMA
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UPON THE EXPIRATION OF THE NEW TREATY."

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2. PRESS RELEASE PRINTED BELOW VELARDE'S LETTER CLARIFIED THE MEANING OF THE PRESIDENT'S USE OF "NEVER" IN HIS REMARKS IN DALLAS. PRESS SPOKESMAN NESSEN, IT STATED: "EXPLAINED THAT BY SAYING 'NEVER' THE PRESIDENT MEANT TO CONVEY 'NEVER WITHIN THE PERIOD OF THE NEW TREATY'."

3. ALL EASTER SUNDAY PAPERS GAVE FRONT PAGE ATTENTION TO THE APRIL 17 NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL ON THE CANAL ISSUE. THE TIMES' CATAGORIZATION OF FORMER GOV. REAGAN'S ANTI-TREATY STATEMENTS AS "IRRESPONSIBLE", AND ITS OPINION THAT TORRIJOS HAS ACTED WITH "RESPONSIBILITY AND PATIENCE ON THIS EXPLOSIVE ISSUE" WERE THE SALIENT POINTS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE ARTICLES.

4. MONDAY'S CRITICA AND MATUTINO (WHICH DO NOT PUBLISH A SUNDAY EDITION) ECHOED THEIR SUNDAY COUNTERPARTS' TREATMENT OF THE NYT ARTICLE. IN ADDITION, CRITICA'S EDITORIAL APPROVED THE SENSE OF THE NYT EDITORIAL, AND APPROVED AS WELL VELARDE'S PRESS RELEASE. MATUTINO ALSO AWARDED PROMINENT COVERAGE TO FOREIGN MINISTER BOYD'S CRITICISM OF REAGAN'S STATEMENTS ON THE CBS MORNING NEWS (ON APRIL 17). BOYD ADDED ON THAT OCCASION THAT HE FELT THE DOMESTIC SITUATION IN PANAMA WAS EXPLOSIVE AND THAT CANAL PROBLEM MUST BE RESOLVED WITHIN THE COMING 12 MONTHS THROUGH A TREATY FAIR FOR BOTH THE US AND PANAMA.

5. COMMENT: THE MANNER IN WHICH US CAMPAIGN DISCUSSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN HANDLED HERE IS EXCELLENT FROM THE EMBASSY'S POINT OF VIEW. VELARDE AND OTHER PANAMANIAN PRESS FIGURES HAVE BEEN ALMOST PUNCTILIOUS IN COOPERATING WITH THE EMBASSY ON HOW ALL THIS IS TO BE PLAYED. WE OUGHT TO RECOGNIZE THEIR COOPERATION, AND RECOGNIZE, OF COURSE, THAT IT IS NOT UNDERTAKEN SOLELY ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE, BUT ON THE GENERAL'S AS WELL.
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